New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1945

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1945 PRODUCTIONS

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NEW YORK SUN
NEW YORK POST
NEW YORK TIMES
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN

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1945 PRODUCTIONS

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THEATRE OPENINGS: "Pygmalion," "Home of the Brave," "Dunnigans Daughter," "Billion Dollar Baby"
Complete reviews appear in this issue

Published by CRITICS' THEATRE REVIEWS : : : 235 EAST 22ND STREET, NEW YORK 10, N. Y.

Critics' Choice of 1945 Films

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Kate Cameron

Story of G.I. Joe
The Lost Weekend
State Fair
The Bells of St. Mary's
Colonel Blimp*
A Tree Grows in Brooklyn
Objective Burma
The House on 92nd Street
Sunday Dinner for a Soldier
Salty O'Rourke

Outstanding factual war films not included with the above studio-made selections.

The True Glory
The Fighting Lady

**Selection based on version originally presented on Broadway—not on later version, cut for off-Broadway presentation.*

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE

Howard Barnes

The Lost Weekend
Story of G.I. Joe
Spellbound
The Bells of St. Mary's
A Tree Grows in Brooklyn
Colonel Blimp*
They Were Expendable
The House on 92nd Street
The Last Chance
Along Came Jones

Outstanding factual war films not included with the above studio-made selections.

The True Glory
The Fighting Lady

**Selection based on version originally presented on Broadway—not on later version, cut for off-Broadway presentation.*

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN

Rose Pelswick

Listed in the order they appeared in New York

The Fighting Lady
Objective Burma
A Tree Grows in Brooklyn
Salty O'Rourke
Anchors Aweigh
State Fair
The True Glory
The House on 92nd Street
Story of G.I. Joe
The Lost Weekend

CONSENSUS

NEW YORK MOTION PICTURE CRITICS' REVIEWS

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1. Story of G.I. Joe
2. The Lost Weekend
3. A Tree Grows in B'klyn
4. State Fair
5. Spellbound
6. The House on 92nd St.
7. Colonel Blimp
8. The Bells of St. Mary's
9. Anchors Aweigh
10. Objective Burma / The Last Chance

The New York Film Critics, comprising 17 voting representatives of the metropolitan dailies, announced their motion picture awards for 1945.

Best Motion Picture
The Lost Weekend

Best Male Performance
Ray Milland

Best Female Performance
Ingrid Bergman

Best Direction
Billy Wilder

Special awards to 2 factual war films
The True Glory
The Fighting Lady

NEW YORK PM

John T. McManus

The Fighting Lady
Colonel Blimp*
The True Glory
Story of G.I. Joe
The Southerner
Spellbound
Objective Burma
The Lost Weekend
They Were Expendable
The Last Chance
A Tree Grows in Brooklyn
Anchors Aweigh
The Bells of St. Mary's

**Selection based on version originally presented on Broadway—not on later version, cut for off-Broadway presentation.*

NEW YORK SUN

Eileen Creelman

Story of G.I. Joe
The Lost Weekend
A Tree Grows in Brooklyn
State Fair
The Bells of St. Mary's
Rhapsody in Blue
Saratoga Trunk
The Woman in the Window
Spellbound
The Picture of Dorian Gray

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM

Alton Cook

Listed in the order they appeared in New York

The Fighting Lady
Objective Burma
A Royal Scandal
Salty O'Rourke
The House on 92nd Street
The Southerner
State Fair
Story of G.I. Joe
Spellbound
The Lost Weekend

NEW YORK POST

Archer Winsten

San Pietro (documentary)
Colonel Blimp*
Story of G.I. Joe
State Fair
Anchors Aweigh
The Last Chance
Love on the Dole
The True Glory
The Fighting Lady
The Lost Weekend

**Selection based on version originally presented on Broadway—not on later version, cut for off-Broadway presentation.*

NEW YORK TIMES

Bosley Crowther

Listed in the order they appeared in New York

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn
The Way Ahead
Anchors Aweigh
Pride of the Marines
The House on 92nd Street
Story of G.I. Joe
Spellbound
The Last Chance
The Lost Weekend
They Were Expendable

Outstanding factual war films not included with the above studio-made selections.

The True Glory
The Fighting Lady

Cast Index

Listed alphabetically are the names of actors and actresses in shows opening during the year 1945. The number opposite the name indicates the pages on which each is found in *New York* THEATRE CRITICS' REVIEWS. We regret that we cannot include the various cast changes, but can only give the opening night casts as published in the New York newspapers.

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A Valuable and Authoritative Record of the Contemporary Theatre

"Home of the Brave"

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

DECEMBER 28, 1945

By Otis L. Guernsey Jr.

War's Aftermath

A SINCERE attempt to dramatize the strains of war on men's minds has been made at the Belasco. "Home of the Brave" mixes psychiatry with melodrama, as an Army doctor in the Pacific explores a case of battle fatigue through flash-backs to an incident on a Jap-held island. The creditable, but not wholly successful, purpose of Arthur Laurents, the author, is to show civilians how some service men have suffered and yet why they are no different from any one else. Faults in construction and characterization may weaken the over-all effect of this play; it is still a good try in a season of hazy theatrical thinking.

• • •

Mental science and battle scenes are not blended as well as one would wish in this script. There are moments of great suspense as five soldiers undertake a mission to map an enemy island scheduled for invasion, and too often they overshadow the principal theme of the drama. This central thread is a delicate one, a combination of tensions in the mind of a Jewish soldier who was obliged to abandon his buddy in the operation. The drama loses force in the shuttle between these two moods, and the mental theme, though occasionally fascinating, is somewhat weakened by obvious motivation. The last act in particular, in which the Jewish boy is convinced that every soldier has a guilty, glad feeling when another man is shot because he himself is still safe, is too easily anticipated.

• • •

The author has taken some short cuts to characterization; his soldiers border dangerously on being familiar types. They work hard with the playwright to prove a case against discrimination for mental, physical or religious reasons, but too much of the time they have only their surfaces showing. The psychiatrist speaks in short, bitter phrases against the wreckage of war upon young men: the Jewish soldier speaks true but repetitive phrases about bigotry; another man keeps to himself an unfortunate "G.I. letter" from his wife, and an ex-wealthy civilian goes about antagonizing every one. Within this narrow framework the drama manages to build several moments of power and sympathy, and often these men come alive, aided by good performances all around.

• • •

Joseph Pevney plays the stricken Jewish private, who must learn that his legs are "paralyzed" only because he didn't want to leave his buddy, with good change of pace between the scenes of limp illness and savage fighting. Alan Baxter, as the introvert whose wife has jilted him, gives a calm and intelligent interpretation of the role.

'HOME OF THE BRAVE.'

Play by Arthur Laurents; directed by Michael Gordon; production designed and lighted by Ralph Alswang; presented by Lee Sabinson, in association with William R. Katzell, at the Belasco Theater, Thursday, December 27, 1945. The cast:

Capt. Harold Bitterger	Eduard Franz
Major Dennis Robinson Jr.	Kendall Clark
T. J.	Russell Hardie
Coney	Joseph Pevney
Finch	Henry Barnard
Mingo	Alan Baxter

and Russell Hardie is accurately unlikable as the soldier who is essentially a civilian. Kendall Clark is perfect as a well meaning but sometimes ingenuous young officer. Eduard Franz is suitably paternal as the doctor, and Henry Barnard completes this expert cast as a kid from a Middle Western farm. The direction by Michael Gordon is well conceived, especially in the scenes of violence on the island, which take place onstage. "Home of the Brave" contributes some fine moments of war and psychological drama, even though it is not a uniformly stable piece of work.

DAILY NEWS

DECEMBER 28, 1945

Laurents' 'Home of the Brave' Is Best Drama Yet on World War II

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Of all the plays I have seen about the second world war, including "The Hasty Heart" and "The Streets Are Guarded," the one which I believe in most is Arthur Laurents' "Home of the Brave," which Lee Sabinson presented last night at the Belasco.

It is tightly written, stagewise in construction, informative, moving and beautifully acted by six men. It drew cheers from last night's first witnesses, and if I had had time I should have liked to remain and holler a particular cheer to a young ex-soldier named Joseph Pevney for his performance of the central role.

Laurents, the author, was a radio writer before he became a soldier —and remained a radio writer, putting together some big army shows for the networks. It has always been easy for anybody or me to jeer at the literature of the wireless—to poke fun at those housewives' delights, the daytime cliffhangers, or those Joe Miller rodeos of the night-time comedians.

But it may be that radio has contributed some little thing to the business of writing, just as a hitch at newspaper reporting—a small hitch, mind you—is supposed to sharpen the mind and fill the pen of the lad who intends some day to put something really important on paper. It may be that trying to build drama for the ear alone, and make it understandable and believable, is a challenge for good men and not what is usually regarded as a sloppy occupation.

Mr. Laurents' drama, "Home of the Brave," is about a wartime guilt complex. In a recent interview he said he supposed everybody has felt guilty—civilians because they weren't in service, specialists like himself who never really fought, and so on, maybe, right up to the generals.

Paralyzed by Guilt.

The guilt complex has made a paralytic of a Jewish soldier nicknamed Coney, and one first sees him at a Pacific base hospital, where a psychiatrist is working on him. The lad has been in action, but he has not been wounded or even hurt; yet he cannot walk and he cannot remember.

The doctor gives him a drug—there is a scientific name for the stuff but I forgot to jot it down—and under its influence the boy can remember. A little at first, then more as the treatments continue. Like a Sherlock Holmes who uses the hypodermic needle on another instead of himself, the doctor patiently tracks down clues, hunting the one mental upset which has paralyzed the young GI's legs.

As the injections take effect and Coney, trancelike, tells what happened, the scenes shift to real war with the Japs and to real soldier life in the jungle. These scenes are exciting dramatically, and written with an ear for soldier talk and a heart for soldier feeling which make them the most convincing I have yet encountered.

Coney, three other GI's and a major—all engineers—land by air and canoe on a Jap island to map it for a forthcoming invasion. As often happens, there is one louse in the outfit: a cocky loudmouth who utters jibes and insults at Coney's race. He calls Coney a dirty yellow little Jew bastard.

But this unhappiness is almost made up for by the affection of a lad from Arizona named Finch. When the clutch comes—discovery by the Japs of the little mapping party and the necessity for escape —Finch loses his head. He forgets where he has put the all-important map case, and will not leave the jungle clearing until he has found it. When Coney's urgings for him to run become frantic, Finch snarls, "You yellow little—" and then catches himself in time to say "jerk."

The wounding of Finch by a sniper, the escape of the rest of the party, Finch's offstage torture by the Nips and his death in the arms of Cone, are rugged theatre. And when Finch dies, Coney finds he cannot walk.

It is, the doctor finally discovers, a guilt complex. When Finch is wounded Coney is glad—glad because of what Finch was about to call him. Later he did all he could to save his dearest friend, but that one awful moment of gladness haunts him. Not until the doctor, and another man in the outfit who lost an arm, persuade him that it is the normal first reaction of any soldier to be glad when the man next him is hit instead of himself—not until then is young Coney's mind free again.

The five others of Mr. Pevney's company are just as right as he is —Eduard Franz as the doctor, Kendall Clark as an earnest young major, Russell Hardie as the loudmouth, Henry Barnard as the pathetic Finch and Alan Baxter as a taciturn, level-headed fighting man.

"Home of the Brave"—*continued*

New York World-Telegram

DECEMBER 28, 1945

By Burton Rascoe

'Home of the Brave' the Season's Finest

In my opinion, "Home of the Brave," by Arthur Laurents, which opened at the Belasco last night, is by long odds the finest drama of the season.

Unless something else comes along to top it, it is the year's most obvious candidate for the Pulitzer Prize. It admirably fulfills the requirement that the prize-winning play should be "an original American play, preferably dealing with American life, which shall best represent the educational value and power of the stage."

Of all the plays we have had in the fight against race prejudice, "Home of the Brave" is by far the most rational and intelligent and therefore the most honest and most eloquent. It treats of the subject without melodrama, false heroics, easy appeals to superficial emotions or sentimentality. It is brave, clear-thinking, of the head as well as of the heart. It is a salutary bit of wisdom for all peoples—and very stirring theater.

"Home of the Brave" is only incidentally a war play. It is probable that Mr. Laurents used the war as a background for convenience sake because the war has produced a great many more cases of psychotic paralysis than ordinarily come to the attention of medical men. The story is of the cause and cure of a case of amnesia and psychotic paralysis of the lower extremities.

How Paralysis Came.

The lad in the play (Joseph Pevney) is paralyzed when he realizes that, for a moment, he was glad that his closest pal in an engineering outfit in the Pacific was killed. His case is complicated by a false association of ideas. He imagines he was glad his friend was dead because, in a moment of excitement just before he was killed, the friend, answering his banter of calling the pal a "hayseed s-o-b," started to slur his (Mr. Pevney's) race.

The problem of the Army psychiatrist is, by suggestion, while the patient is in a semi hypnotic state, to get at the cause of the psychic trauma. Having reached it, the next step is to dissociate the ideas which the sensitive youngster has falsely associated in his thought processes and in his emotional reactions. He has a false sense, artificially induced in early life and nourished by examples of race prejudice, that, because of his race, he is somehow different from others. This sense induces a feeling of deep guilt concerning a very ordinary reaction of soldiers under fire. One is "glad" only because oneself is not killed.

Problem Resolved.

When the psychiatrist (Eduard Franz) enables the lad to understand and feel that his immediate reaction to the death of his pal was not special to him or to his race but common to all men, the lad regains his memory, his power of locomotion and a healthy view of life. Meanwhile, he learns that those who have made him race conscious by slurs are held in deep contempt by those of their own race. The problem is resolved by a series of switchbacks from the hospital to the causative events.

The cast under the direction of Michael Gordon is so uniformly good that it would be invidious to bestow special praise on any one of them. All of them are featured in the billing. And the sets by Ralph Alswang are excellent.

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Journal American

DECEMBER 28, 1945

'Home of the Brave' Opens at Belasco

By ROBERT GARLAND

Difficult, this "Home of the Brave," this tragic-comedy written by Arthur Laurents, this comic-tragedy produced by Lee Sabinson, this drama about the war which has come into the Belasco. Difficult to clarify. Difficult to classify. Difficult to criticize. For an earnest, yet vacillating playwright superimposes one problem upon another, and never brings them out into the light together.

One problem is the problem of the sensitive man in war, whether he is a Gentile or a Jew. The other is the problem of the sensitive man who is a Jew, whether he is a soldier or a civilian. For three acts, nearly three times that many scenes, Mr. Laurents tries wholeheartedly to make the sensitive man in war and the sensitive man who is a Jew into one and the same problem.

Infrequently does he succeed, if at all. You never actually feel that his psychopathic hero is beside himself because he is a Jew at war. Instead, you feel that his psychopathic hero would be beside himself whenever and wherever he permitted his hypersensitivity to take possession of him, as Jew or Gentile, in war or peace, on an island in the Pacific or in a public school in New York City.

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Those GI Blues

In "Home of the Brave" you see two officers and four enlisted men deep in the GI blues on an island in the Pacific. A dangerous mission must be made. It must be made despite the fact that the men who are to make it are on one another's nerves. In a series of throwbacks, the playwright shows you what happens. And through Pvt. Coney's war-shocked mind.

It is Arthur Laurents, the playwright, not I, the playgoer, who insists and reinsists that Pvt. Coney is a Jew and that his fellow men-in-uniform do not like him as much as they would have liked him had he been a Gentile. Frankly, I don't believe it. Even more frankly, I can't believe it. Anybody would like Pvt. Coney, no matter what his race, his color or his creed.

If anybody in "Home of the Brave" doesn't like Pvt. Coney, it is Pvt. Coney himself. His is an inferiority complex only a scheming dramatist could bestow upon so superior a character. And, in that man's army or in this man's private life, no bullying braggart could hurt him as he is hurt at the Belasco. Every day I see Pvt. Coneys in mufti as they rise superior to that stupid sort of prejudice.

First-Class Private

All of which leads to a report that "Home of the Brave" is best when hanging around a hut, an office or a hospital room at its Pacific Base, indulging in four-letter-word soldier talk which never was on land or sea. Here, you have the semblance of reality which, in the world of make-believe, is more realistic than the thing itself. "Charming," GIs say!

Of the Americans with whom "Home of the Brave" is conversationally endowed, the Pvt. Coney of Joseph Pevney is more praiseworthy than the others. In the hands of Mitzi Green's husband, recently returned from active service in the E.T.O., his portrait of a sensitive Jew who is a man-in-uniform, of a man-in-uniform who is a sensitive Jew, is worthy of the cheers it received last evening.

His fellow-officers and men are more alive and ticking than the fellow officers and men the playwright asks for. Especially when they talk off the record. Only when, suiting Playwright Laurents' actions to Playwright Laurents' words, they move into plots and prejudices are they curious characters in a curious comic-tragedy that is difficult to clarify, classify or criticize...I like it, anyway!

The New York Times

DECEMBER 28, 1945

THE PLAY

By LEWIS NICHOLS

In "Home of the Brave," which is his first play, Arthur Laurents is making a sincere and honest effort to bring to the theatre something which is not often there. His is a serious drama, seriously produced. Lately out of the Army, he is writing of the war and about a soldier who is suffering from nerve shock. There can be no question of his motives as he discusses his case history, and he carefully keeps away from the shoddy and the easy. But unfortunately as a play to be set before an audience at the Belasco, "Home of the Brave" does not succeed in fulfilling all of the author's intentions; its aim is higher than the arrow will carry.

* * *

The history is that of a young Jewish soldier in the Pacific. Suffering from shock, he is unable to walk, and the psychiatrist says that as soon as he knows what worries him subconsciously he will recover. The scenes range from the hospital room back to the island where he and four mates are on a mapping expedition preceding invasion. His best friend is killed, and after that he cannot walk. He thinks he is different from other soldiers because he is a Jew; he has the memory of anger and says he believes his paralysis came about when his friend, in sudden rage, remarked on his faith. Another soldier, who had lost an arm, persuades him there is no distinction due to faith—all men are the same.

Mr. Laurents' best scenes are those on the island, when the mapping has been done and the men are hiding from snipers until they can get away. The talk is clipped and good, and there are suspense and excitement. The author weakens his case history by the introduction of the discussion of faith, however, since it seems to have been forced into the play rather than belonging there naturally, and it is not clearly resolved. Mr. Laurents would have had a sharper picture had he stuck to one theme. Then, too, by the time the last act arrives, the excitement of the play has passed and there is a good deal of water-treading before the author brings down his curtain.

The acting on the whole is good, since it, too, is sincere. Joseph Pevney is the young Jewish soldier, and plays the part with restraint and dignity. Alan Baxter is a soldier who gets "the GI letter"—that his wife is leaving him; Henry Bernard is the one who is killed; Russell Hardie is a former big money-maker turned private, and Eduard Franz is the doctor. The major in command of the mapping expedition is played by Kendall Clark, who perhaps makes him a little weaker than necessary. Michael Gordon directed, and the settings—good ones—are by Ralph Alswang. Lee Sabinson, who showed his courage last year by offering "Trio," is the producer.

New York Post

DECEMBER 28, 1945

'Home of the Brave,' Or Psychiatry at War

By Wilella Waldorf

"Home of the Brave," the war play by Arthur Laurents produced last night at the Belasco, is a psychiatric case history in which an Army doctor requires just two weeks to get to the bottom of the mental and physical breakdown of an engineer stationed in the Pacific, and literally puts him on his feet again, ready to be shipped back to the states.

Pvt. Coney, one of a five-man reconnaissance mission to an island occupied by the Japs, is brought back to base not only unable to walk but suffering from loss of memory. Dr. Bitterger, a psychiatrist in uniform, administers a drug that causes the boy to recall everything that went on before he was stricken, and so the play is developed as a series of flash-backs depicting jungle warfare at its most harrowing, interspersed with hospital sessions with the doc.

In the course of probing into the mind of the temporarily unbalanced soldier, the author puts a good deal of emphasis on anti-Semitism, and there are times during the evening when the play takes on the somewhat overwrought solemnity of a dramatic tract written for broadcasting purposes (with narrator), but on the whole the case history holds interest, while the jungle fighting is sporadically exciting and full of suspense.

A cast of only six men performs well under Michael Gordon's guidance, and since a Lieutenant-Colonel of Marines acted as technical adviser, presumably it's quite harmless to smoke cigarets while hiding from a bunch of Jap snipers ready to swoop down from almost any direction. The small band of Americans seemed to this untutored civilian to be taking undue risks standing up in lighted areas instead of staying down and attempting to look like a cluster of tropical foliage, which simply goes to show how little we Broadwayites know about fighting in the Pacific.

Joseph Pevney and Eduard Franz made a good team as the demoralized private and his doc, with Alan Baxter, Russell Hardie, Kendall Clark and Henry Barnard equally good as their mates, while Ralph Alswang's tropical scenery swung around on a revolving stage whenever the medico injected his drug. Generally well produced, and often dramatically stirring, it is unfortunately true that "Home of the Brave" loses some of its strength in the theatre through arriving a trifle late. It would undoubtedly have caused more of a furore if done here before the atomic bombs began to fall on Japan.

PM

DECEMBER 28, 1945

—Kronenberger—

An Honest Play Falls Short

PM Reviews

Home of the Brave is rather a troubling play to see. It is also, in a different sense, a rather troubling play to review. In a generally weak and sleazy season, Mr. Laurents has written seriously, and sometimes quite effectively, about a serious subject—a Jewish G. I. whose self-consciousness and prickliness about his race make him, under the stress of warfare, the victim of a paralyzing traumatic shock. This also happens to be a fairly ticklish subject, and Mr. Laurents has walked right up to it. Within his chosen framework, moreover, he has examined it with considerable intelligence. All this commands one's respect and, more than that, one's interest. The interest deriving from a plausible case history; the interest inherent in a pertinent problem play.

Yet I can't call *Home of the Brave* a really satisfactory evening in the theater. Mr. Laurents has tackled his problem a little too clinically, he has pursued it a little too clumsily, and he has "solved" it a great deal too quickly and patly. The only thing, in the end, that makes his intelligence and forthrightness rather impressive is their incredible rarity in the theater. For Mr. Laurents has not enough else to back them up with. Like almost all problem plays, *Home of the Brave* is at bottom hopelessly inartistic and right on the surface decidedly didactic. It displays very little really good writing. Two or three rather tense scenes of South Pacific warfare give it some of the theatrical lift it needs, but they do not solve Mr. Laurents' fundamental problem. They do not really transfer the play from the narrow orbit of psychopathology to the broad field of drama.

* * *

The technique employed itself militates against any such transfer. Mr. Laurents has shown an army doctor using psychotherapy on the paralyzed Peter Cohen — having the soldier re-enact the scenes that brought on the shock. Peter's buddy, under stress of danger, had started to taunt Peter with being a Jew; Peter had felt a moment of gladness—and then, because of it, long days of guilt—when his buddy was shot; and the guilt feeling had deepened because Peter, in pursuit of duty, had not stayed with his wounded comrade. (This, of course, brings up a second problem.)

By using this technique, Mr. Laurents' "story" is quite finished by the end of Act II. Act III exists only to straighten Peter out, to have him get over the feeling that he is immutably "different" because he is a Jew. He gets over it, in one of those last-ten-minute realizations that are one of the banes of the dramatic form. Certainly it doesn't wash as a permanent cure; the Peters of this world are right back where they were 24 hours later; need years, not minutes, to alter. And the third act doesn't wash, dramatically, as even the most elementary kind of playwriting.

Mr. Gordon's direction gives the play as much movement and tautness as seems possible. The acting, however, is generally not so effective. Joseph Pevney plays Peter with some insight into character, but without much dexterity in performance; and most of the other actors, though adequate, fail to give their roles the proper authority. An exception is Alan Baxter, who plays with assurance and skill.

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

"Home of the Brave"—*continued*

The Sun

DECEMBER 28, 1945

'Home of the Brave,' a Thoughtful Play, Barely Misses Being Good One.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

"Home of the Brave," the Belasco's third play of the current season, isn't quite all it should be, but it is a vast improvement on the others that haven't bothered to go to Boston or even Trenton and have opened cold in 44th Street. The first performance was given last night.

Arthur Laurents, a new dramatist, is the author of "Home of the Brave." Lee Sabinson, who made the headlines with last season's "Trio," is the producer, in association with William R. Katzell. They have brought into the Belasco a play dealing with anti-Semitism and men at war that is thoughtful, sincere and frequently exciting. It's a piece, however, that is really over when the second act ends. The third is skimpy and anti-climactic.

A six-character, all-male play, "Home of the Brave" has been well directed by Michael Gordon and it brings forth Arthur Laurents as a writer of definite promise with a genuine feeling for the theater. And Lee Sabinson again reveals perception as a showman.

The principal character in the Laurents play is Coney, a Jewish G. I. who sustained paralysis of both legs as a result of shock received in action in the far Pacific. He is in the care of an Army psychiatrist as the play opens and the subsequent flashback scenes recreate the events leading up to his collapse.

Coney, suffering since childhood from anti-Semitic taunts, finds that in the Army, as a member of an engineering outfit, he is still not free of them. He is one of a small group of volunteers for a map-making expedition to a Jap-held island, which is to be invaded by the Americans. When his comrade Winch is shot in jungle fighting Coney, as he confesses to the psychiatrist, is glad of it because Finch, just before being hit, was about to turn upon him with invective of the kind already used by the griping, Jew-hating misfit in the group known as T. J. It's later that Coney suffers shock as he is trying to bury Finch, dead of his wounds. Coney's cure, mentally and physically, is effected by the treatment known as narcosynthesis, and as the play ends he is looking toward adjustment to civilian life in a business partnership with another G. I., who is going home minus an arm.

There is some sharp writing in this "Home of the Brave." The talk of the Jap-fighting engineers is generally excellent. The scenes in the tangle of jungle give the feeling of the nearness of the crouching and invisible enemy. There is a good deal of repetition in the play, however, and the final act fails to sustain the interest and the excitement of the two that preceded it.

"Home of the Brave" is well played by Eduard Franz as the tireless psychiatrist, Kendall Clark as a youthful major, Russell Hardie as the snarling T. J., Joseph Pevney as the complex-ridden Coney, Henry Barnard as Finch and Alan Baxter as Mingo, homeward bound with an empty sleeve.

Arthur Laurents has things to say, and says them effectively for much of the way. His "Home of the Brave" just misses being a good play.

"Dunnigan's Daughter"

New York World-Telegram

DECEMBER 27, 1945

By Burton Rascoe

Smart Talk Rattling Around in Empty Shell

S. N. Behrman's "Dunnigan's Daughter," which the Theater Guild presented at the John Golden last night, is a thin-gruel modern version of Ibsen's "A Doll's House," in which there is no inevitability in the development of the theme, no firm establishment of character, and only a mild eyebrow-lifting surprise instead of a climax.

Mr. Behrman excels in the smart repartee of drawing-room comedy—the sort that tosses in references to the chiaroscuro of Rembrandt, the springlike quality of Botticelli and the magic of Vermeer. He quips neatly about psychoanalysis and the State Department, and turns an epigram in every fourth "side." This talent has been his undoing in "Dunnigan's Daughter," for he has supplied his principals with a rippling lot of urbane and artificial chatter, which not only completely dehydrates them (to use one of his witty inspirations) but destroys whatever drama there is inherent in the theme.

All So Callow.

The result is a story of a wife who achieves a soul of her own by walking out on her husband—a story which Ibsen made moving and sensational 66 years ago—treated in the manner of the Smart Set Magazine, circa 1912. And it is made ludicrous by Mr. Behrman's trying to give it a touch of contemporary social and political significance. It was all so callow that some irreverent persons laughed where Mr. Behrman did not intend they should.

Of course, it is always a pleasure to watch such gifted and personable actors as Miss Havoc and Mr. King perform, and their support (particularly in the case of Jan Sterling) was of that quality which we have come to expect from Theater Guild presentations wherein Eliza Kazan figures as the director. The set, too, by Stewart Chaney, is elegant, without being gaudy, as befits the surroundings of a minor tycoon who is a connoisseur of art.

Plot of Play.

The play tells of a ruthlessly acquisitive man (Mr. King), whose only satisfactions in life are power and revenge. For his fourth marriage (his wives have all run away from him) he selects a girl (Miss Havoc) nearly the age of his own daughter. She was, for four years, madly in love with him because of his manliness and strength. However, a Mexican muralist, a young careerman in the State Department who is wooing her stepdaughter, and Mr. King himself, while vulgarly in his cups, combine one day to make her realize that she is only a doll in a doll's house and that she will never be an individual until she leaves her tyrannical spouse.

Inasmuch as her final decision is to run away with her stepdaughter's suitor and inasmuch as her love seems to have been awakened only by the chap's disclosure that her husband helped ruin her father and drive him to suicide, she still seems such a sawdust marionette as to be no bargain for her soulmate (Mr. Widmark). . . . The scene is set in a small mining town in Mexico where Mr. King, by bribing the officials, has diverted the water away from the farm lands of the peasants upstate, thereby arousing the hatred of Mr. Widmark and endangering the good neighbor policy. Mr. King seems but a picayune tycoon at worst, and too likable for a deep-dyed villain.

"DUNNIGAN'S DAUGHTER," by S. N. Behrman, at the John Golden Theater. Presented by the Theater Guild; staged by Elia Kazan; settings by Stewart Chaney; costumes by Mainbocher.

THE CAST:

Jim Baird	Richard Widmark
Robert	Hale Norcross
Zelda Rainier	Jan Sterling
Miguel Blanki	Luther Adler
Ferns Rainier	June Havoc
Clay Rainier	Dennis King
Jesus y Blanco Hernandez	Arthur Gomez

PM

DECEMBER 27, 1945

—Kronenberger—

More Rhetoric Than Reality

PM Reviews

DUNNIGAN'S DAUGHTER

Mr. Behrman's new play is not one of his good ones. It is not even, on the whole, one of his more interesting ones. Despite dialogue that at times has polish and at times has punch, it is a curiously high-pitched but low-voltaged play. Despite a central character who has great meaning for the modern world, and great possibilities for theater, *Dunnigan's Daughter* seems pretty remote and unreal. It has the effect without the excitement of melodrama—of a kind of verbal melodrama. People speak with a rhetorical emphasis, a kind of highbrow hissing and sneering, that makes what they say too pat, and themselves unreal. And the story, for all its social implications, winds up entirely too much on a note of The Villain Foiled.

This is too bad, for Mr. Behrman is a man of wit and understanding, and his theme could be a vital one. He is concerned with a ruthless industrialist, a power-haunted egoist who, by fair means or foul, must not only be a master in the world of business, but must dominate wives and daughters. Clay Rainier is not just the garden variety robber baron and domestic tyrant; he has esthetic sensibility, a refined cruelty, a monumental vanity, and—so we are told—great charm. His third wife is the daughter of a politician he helped send to prison: she has loved him, and he has mastered her. Her eventual liberator is an old beau, a State Department man who has come to Mexico—where Rainier is living—to investigate his business operations. The diplomat is not to be charmed or bullied or bribed by the businessman; and when he goes away, prepared to expose Rainier's methods, it is also to marry his wife. By that time, too, Rainier's daughter has run out on him.

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The industrialist is vanquished in the play; and let us hope that, as the play says, the sands are running out for him and his kind. But the demonstration seems too easy. Or rather, we must go back a step and say that we never accept Clay Rainier as a real man of power in the first place; and that he no more seems fascinating than he seems flesh-and-blood. Dennis King has given the part a certain cruelty and coldness of heart, but he has not conveyed the dimensions it must have—because, for one thing, Mr. Behrman has not created them. This being so, it is hard for the people Rainier has subjugated to seem convincing in relation to him; or for him to achieve the social meaning that he should. He seems just a kind of villian that writers of melodrama, quite as much as writers like Mr. Behrman, delight in portraying.

Mr. Behrman has, to be sure, his good moments. He has contrived two or three hard-hitting scenes, and much of his dialogue has force and finesse of a kind. But by being too literary and assured for human speech, it adds to the bloodlessness and hollowness of the play. There is something over-emphatic about the direction, also; doubtless Mr. Kazan was faced with a choice of evils. As for the acting, little of it can be censured but little of it seems to help. June Havoc is once again appealing, but she cannot really bring off the wife. Luther Adler, as a Mexican painter; Richard Widmark, as the State Department man; and Jan Sterling, as Rainier's young daughter, are all, in their way, competent enough: it is probably the author's fault that they none of them seem real.

—Louis Kronenberger

Journal-American

DECEMBER 27, 1945

Theatre Guild Offers New Behrman Play

By ROBERT GARLAND

It's a pity the Theatre Guild already has a show called "Carousel." For the new play this prime producer brought last night into the Golden could use the title neatly.

The gist of the argument is that S. N. Behrman's latest, but far from greatest, piece of playmaking goes 'round and 'round and 'round. And to the tune of "I Don't Know Where I'm Going, But I'm On My Way."

Ever since I can remember—and I can remember as far back as 1927, when "The Second Man" talked itself dizzy with Lynn Fontanne, Alfred Lunt, Earl Larrimore and Margalo Gillmore doing most of the talking—Mr. Behrman has been a pushover for conversation. Frequently, he's brilliant at it. But when it comes to suiting actions to his words, he's ofttimes insecure.

As often as not his brilliance leaves him high but dry in "Dunnigan's Daughter," the talkfest on which the Theatre Guild has lavished everything but the name of "Carousel." Under the supervision of Theresa Helburn and Lawrence Langner, the cast is out of Equity's top drawer, while the Chaney setting is highclass, the Mainbocher gowns are elegant and the Kazan direction is refined.

If there's a defaulter in 45th Street, he's the S. N. Behrman, whose characters talk him out of a mighty pretty set-up.

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Double Triangle

From where I sit, well to the back of one of Broadway's most uncooperative auditoriums, there's less to "Dunnigan's Daughter" than meets the eye. This is to confess that Mr. Behrman's words fail to live up to Mr. Chaney's background; Mr. Behrman's ideas fail to live up to Mr. Mainbocher's gowns and Mr. Behrman's actions fail to live up to Mr. Kazan's direction. Behrman is to blame!

While Dennis King, as a rich American refugee in Mexico; June Havoc, as his wife from the wrong side of the railroad tracks; Jan Sterling, as his daughter by a former marriage; Richard Widmark, as his daughter's disapproving boy-friend and Luther Adler as a peasant painter who might be Diego Rivera argue pro and con, I find my attention wandering. Counting rows, or something unimportant!

Nevertheless, I'm in a position to tell you that "Dunnigan's Daughter" contains a double-dose of the ancient and dishonorable triangle in which man marries woman, woman meets rival, rival and woman run away and play house together.

Up there on the finely furbished stage of the Golden, our Americans in Mexico cross and double-cross each other while going 'round and 'round and 'round.

Conversing as they circle, you just don't seem to care. Neither do they, if you take Mr. Behrman at their spoken words.

• • •

Mexican McCoy

Let me repeat that The Theatre Guild has given its new S. N. Behrman play more than its new S. N. Behrman play gives back again. The cast, in which Dennis King and June Havoc are costarred, is what every playwright prays for. Mr. King does right by the Clay Ranier who manages to combine much that went against the good American grain in Adolf Hitler and Vidkun Quisling.

June Havoc, completing the round trip from the Mexico of "Mexican Hayride" to the Mexico of "Dunnigan's Daughter" by way of "Sadie Thompson" and "The Ryan Girl," furthers her upward and onward career by a dynamic performance of the Hitler-Quisling fellow's wife. In a gown by Hickson and a suit by Carnegie, she also honors the Gypsy Rose Lee who is her sister.

After his non-English-speaking Captain Angelini in "Common Ground," it's a pleasure to understand Luther Adler's plain-talk as the mural-maker called Miguel Riachi. He's the Mexican McCoy, all right, even if he seldom lets his left hand know what his right hand is saying.

But, if you ask me, the Jim Baird of Richard Widmark is even better than the others. Dick's got something here.

There's a theatrical saying that all production and no play makes a dull evening. "Dunnigan's Daughter" is mostly production!

"Dunnigan's Daughter"—*continued*

The New York Times

DECEMBER 27, 1945

'Dunnigan's Daughter' Makes Its Broadway Debut at the Golden

By LEWIS NICHOLS

S. N. Behrman is an acknowledged master of words, polite, highly polished, thoughtful, affable. In his new play, however, the servant has turned on the master. "Dunnigan's Daughter," with which the Theatre Guild opened its season last evening at the Golden, finds Mr. Behrman caught in the shining bands of his own phrases. The drama seems more like a literary exercise than something to be brought alive upon the stage; all sense of feeling and of warmth have been distilled away. The craftsman this time has paid more attention to the form than to the substance and, pyramiding evil, has so overwritten at times that "Dunnigan's Daughter" is occasionally within winking distance of potential parody. This is not Mr. Behrman with his best pen.

The ethical dispute is between power and personal freedom, and the participants are a harsh, cynical businessman and his third wife —Dunnigan's daughter. The scene is Mexico, where the man, after the fashion or robber barons, is ignoring the rights of the natives, at the same time he is badly treating his wife. She decides to leave and is invited to go along with a Mexican artist, but having other plans, Mr. Behrman sends her forth with a young member of the United States State Department, an old friend. Dunnigan, incidentally, has committed suicide while in prison, and it is his daughter's discovery that her husband had something to do with it which finally sets her free of him.

Though we grant Mr. Behrman his basic rights to a character study of the man of cynical power, he has not succeeded in making a good one. For a time Clay Rainier is believable, and then so much conversation takes place, so much well-written evil is poured over and by him, that the figure collapses of its own weight. The third act of "Dunnigan's Daughter" is undisguisedly mechanical, for all the world as thought the daughter were going through the available men on the principle of eenie, meenie, minie, mo, and then picking one. Mr. Behrman does not trouble to explain what motivated the business man so that he became what he is, nor the wife; and he, himself, directs the ending rather than let it come about naturally.

* * *

Dennis King is the business man, and, like the character, is much more believable at the beginning than at the end. At the start he makes Rainier a walking snarl, but when the Rainier home begins to come apart, he cannot keep up any better than can Mr. Behrman. June Havoc is the wife, playing her naturally rather than emotionally, whic his practical and in order, and Richard Widmark is the forthright younger statesman. Luther Adler is the Mexican painter, the most likable of the author's set of figures, and he gives an amusing performance. Elia Kazan directed, and Stewart Chaney's setting is wide and wealthy.

DAILY NEWS

DECEMBER 27, 1945

Theatre Guild Does Drama By Behrman

By ROBERT SYLVESTER

Unless he got paid by the word, it's hard to understand why a playwright of S. N. Behrman's experience and ability wrote "Dunnigan's Daughter." Or why the Theatre Guild, nursing it through a long tryout tour, took the trouble to recast it and apply other pulmotors. For seldom in one evening of theatre have so many words been spoken on one stage and all meant so little.

"Dunnigan's Daughter" is the girl whose father died in jail and who married a brutally selfish millionaire. We meet her in Mexico, where her husband has one of his many homes anrd where he is apparently making a very nice thing of starving some native farmers up the river. Her stepdaughter is with her. So is a famous Mexican muralist, a guest engaged in one of the tycoon's art projects. Wandering in and out is her highschool sweetheart who—yes, that's right, he's working for the State Department and stands for everything the selfish tycoon fears and ridicules.

Tiresome Talk.

It is obvious to everybody except the actors involved that both the former Miss Dunnigan and her pretty stepdaughter will ultimately have to make up their minds whether to go on under the luxuriant domination of the ruthless executive or take a chance on the State Department's brave new world.

It wouldn't seem to be a very tough decision. But it takes the girls all night to decide and it keeps everybody concerned talking endlessly on just about every subject from which Mr. Behrman can wring some slick, parlor chatter.

Both the talking and the plotting are so artificial an l shallow that one can hardly blame the actors involved for the results accomplished.

As the megalomaniacal tycoon, Dennis King sounds and looks like Clifton Webb in a bedroom blackout. As the over sensitive wife, June Havoc is better as a Dunnigan than she was as a Ryan. But she is still given to moues and posturing. As the Mexican muralist, Luther Adler does a fairly accurate imitation of Chico Marx's organ grinder. The nicest thing that can be said of Richard Widmark and Jan Sterling, as the youngsters, is that they're a little too young.

Director Elia Kazan can step up and get his knuckles rapped, too. He never changes pace—a fault which was obvious in his handling of "Deep Are the Roots"—and he seems to think that by keeping everybody talking at top speed the dialogue will sound better. Or maybe just be over quicker.

Ah, well, the Theatre Guild can't have a hit every time.

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The Sun

DECEMBER 27, 1945

'Dunnigan's Daughter,' Behrman's Play, Dull, Unwieldy Conversation Piece.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

The soaring Theater Guild began its New York season last night at the Golden, and it's a beginning that is far from impressive. S. N. Behrman's new play, "Dunnigan's Daughter," which has covered a lot of mileage in its pre-Broadway travels, is a dull, unwieldy and artificial play—too talky, too loose, and its characters never achieve reality.

Behrman expounds and sermonizes on social and economic problems. He lets go on the subjects of love, matrimony, high finance and the state of the world that lies ahead. His dialogue is glib, literate and frequently amusing but "Dunnigan's Daughter" remains a disorganized conversation piece. It never begins to build into a play.

The locale is Mexico, near a small mining town. Dunnigan's daughter—Dunnigan was a machine politician who died a suicide in prison—is the neglected third wife of a plundering and possessive man of money, an industrialist and art collector. He is vain, cold-blooded and ruthless and casually regards his alluring wife as another of his possessions. His unscrupulous acquisition of water rights in the Mexican community in which he lives is vigorously opposed by an idealistic representative of the State Department. Finally, it is this young man's revelation that it was the powerful Rainier who was actually responsible for sending Dunnigan to prison that breaks the millionaire's hold on his wife and she walks out on him, as does his own daughter.

The man of big business, tormented by a sense of insecurity for all his high talk, never becomes a fascinating character or a particularly interesting one and Dennis King doesn't succeed in making a person of him. June Havoc has the role of the wife and hers is a performance that again brings the admission that she is certainly one of the most attractive young women of our theater, but that she still has a considerable way to go as an actress.

None of the other players—Richard Widmark as the crusading young diplomat, Luther Adler as a predatory mural painter, Jan Sterling as the high-spirited but confused daughter of the millionaire—become believable, but certainly the fault lies chiefly in the job of playwriting that Behrman has turned in. Luther Adler has some amusing outbursts as the painter and wears a Mexican make-up that often gives him the appearance of a Marx brother on the prowl. Elia Kazan, serving as director, has done what he could in trying to bring these puppets at the Golden to life. The setting, showing the interior of the Rainier house, has been nicely designed by Stewart Chaney.

"Dunnigan's Daughter," for all Behrman's facility with dialogue, is a very weak play, not worth his time or the Guild's.

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NEW YORK Herald Tribune

DECEMBER 27, 1945

By HOWARD BARNES

Almost a Step-Child

S. N. BEHRMAN'S epigrams are as eloquent as ever in "Dunnigan's Daughter." They do not keep his new play at the John Golden from being a down-at-heel show. The author can pair "know-how" and dreams in felicitous fashion as he contrasts a possessive tycoon with an idealist. He brings other characters to a shimmering half-realization by the sheer poetry of his dialogue in this new Theater Guild production. What is wanting is a dramatic scheme of some direction and meaning. Frequently the honeyed speeches of the piece are as extraneous as declamations at a Quaker meeting. They merely befuddle a confused dramatic meditation.

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It is not easy to say what Behrman was meditating in "Dunnigan's Daughter." The clew is certainly not in the title. Although June Havoc plays that supposedly central role with considerable verve, she is considerably nonplussed by the fact that her part is no such thing. It is obviously the character of the ruthless business man, portrayed admirably by Dennis King, which chiefly interested its creator. Next to that would be the radical Mexican artist, who is challenged to make love to the industrialist's wife. Luther Adler is extremely good in this interlocutor's assignment, but he is left as high and dry as all the others in the cast.

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Since Behrman is wise as well as witty, he has pertinent things to say in the course of a rambling dissertation. Setting his action in a rich American's hacienda outside a small Mexican mining town, he is able to call the turn on power politics, the stumblings of a state department and the compromises that bring individuals as well as nations to the brink of destruction. Unfortunately, he does not make one care much whether the industrialist succeeds in his lust for power or his wronged young wife escapes his clutches. Meanwhile, the knight in shining armor is as dimensional as a lead soldier.

• • •

Elia Kazan had little choice in the staging of the work. Armed with a plethora of brilliant lines, he has tried to make them ring across the Golden stage, even when they do little to serve the dramatic continuity. Frequently King will be lurking in the wings when the shiny coins of dialogue are being scattered elsewhere. At least that actor makes a tolerably focal figure in the proceedings. Miss Havoc is more wan than winning as the rebellious wife; Jan Sterling has a highly anomalous job as the tycoon's daughter by a former marriage and Richard Widmark is forced to look like an eager idealist rather than be one. Stewart Chaney's set and some Mainbocher gowns are in the best tradition of Theater Guild investiture. Dunnigan's Daughter" is fancy. It is also foolish and dull.

New York Post

DECEMBER 27, 1945

S. N. Behrman Still Using a Familiar Formula

By Wilella Waldorf

In the ready-to-wear business various firms put out every season or so what they call a "basic dress." It is usually a simple affair, in good taste, guaranteed not to shock anybody, and may be touched up here and there with a few smart accessories and made to seem quite distinctive and even original to those who haven't seen the trick worked too often.

"Dunnigan's Daughter," produced last night at the Golden Theatre, is the latest Theatre Guild variation of S. N. Behrman's basic play. Subscribers will find in it nothing new nor particularly exciting, but the beguiling Behrman touches are there just where they ought to be and the accessories as usual are smart and attractive.

The scene this time is Clay Rainier's residence in Mexico where the American millionaire is living at the moment with his third wife (Dunnigan's Daughter) and his own daughter by a former wife, calmly putting over a business deal that threatens the livelihood of thousands of Mexican farmers up the river. It's all perfectly legal bribery, apparently, but an idealistic young man from the U. S. State Dept. thinks such deals may be bad for international relations.

The second act climax—if such a talkative and imperturbable play can be said to achieve anything so dramatic as a second act climax—naturally is a "scene" between the plutocrat and the young man from the State Dept., and Mr. Behrman also tosses in an entertaining house guest in the person of Miguel Riachi, a noted Mexican mural artist, who describes himself as a theoretical Communist.

Any theatre-goer who has been keeping track of the Behrman Basic for the past ten years or so will know just what to expect without further enlightenment, and it is necessary to add here simply that the accessories supplied by the Guild are of the best quality, including direction by Elia Kazan, setting by Stewart Chaney, and an acting company headed by Dennis King, an impeccable plutocrat; Luther Adler, an amusing artist; Richard Widmark, a likeable young diplomat; June Havoc, a distressed wife in a rather thankless title role, and Jan Sterling, as the millionaire's daughter.

"Pygmalion"

New York Post

DECEMBER 27, 1945

Lawrence and Massey Star In Revival of 'Pygmalion'

Organized for the purpose of presenting plays of enduring quality as well as products of new authors, Theatre Incorporated got off to a fine and intelligent start with its production of Bernard Shaw's "Pygmalion" at the Barrymore Theatre last night.

The new organization proposes to limit the run of "Pygmalion" to eight weeks. It is more than likely, however, it will find difficulty adhering to this schedule. Although not Shaw's best, this story of the "draggle-tailed gutter-snipe" who was passed off as a duchess under the tutelage of a phoneitcs professor, is still grand entertainment.

Gertrude Lawrence and Raymond Massey share the roles Lynn Fontanne and Reginald Mason played when New Yorkers last saw "Pygmalion" on the stage in 1926.

Mr. Massey's Professor Higgins is an admirable creation executed in the happiest comic vein. He seemed a trifle unsure of himself in the first scene, but soon took hold of his part in the true Shavian manner. It is hard to imagine a more convincing Cockney flower-girl-turned-lady than Miss Lawrence.

Melville Cooper also is perfectly cast as the dustman whose irrelevant philosophy and dry humor are high spots in the revival. Cecil Humphreys does sufficiently well as Colonel Pickering and Anita Bolster acts a charmingly simple and devoted housekeeper. Katherine Emmet is pleasing as the cultivated lady. The other parts are also well played. Sir Cedric Hardwicke has staged the production with skill and restraint. The settings by Donald Oenslager are imaginative and effective.

B. R.

'PYGMALION.'

A play by George Bernard Shaw presented by Theater Incorporated, Richard Aldrich, managing director, at the Ethel Barrymore Theater, Wednesday evening, December 26, 1945. Staged by Cedric Hardwicke. Settings by Donald Oenslager. Costumes by Motley.

The cast:

Clara Eynsford-Hill	Wendy Atkin
Mrs. Eynsford-Hill	Myrtle Tannehill
Bystander	J. P. Watson
Freddy Eynsford-Hill	John Cromwell
Eliza Doolittle	Gertrude Lawrence
Colonel Pickering	Cecil Humphreys
Henry Higgins	Raymond Massey
Sarcastic bystander	Jay Black
Taxicab driver	Rudolph Watson
Mrs. Pearce	Anita Bolster
Alfred Doolittle	Melville Cooper
Mrs. Higgins	Katherine Emmet
Parlour Maid	Hazel Jones

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PM

DECEMBER 27, 1945

Good News For Shaw Fans

PM Reviews

Pygmalion, Shaw's romance of the bedraggled, Cockney flower girl who was transformed into a "duchess," came back to Broadway last night after an absence of two decades with Gertrude Lawrence as its star. The evening proved a happy one for actress and playwright. For, though written in 1912, *Pygmalion* remains a triumph of comedy, human insight and social satire; a Cinderella story for adults, representing one of Shaw's most successful efforts to resist the talkiness and intellectualism that have withered many of his later plays.

It is the current production's good fortune to have Gertrude Lawrence playing Liza Doolittle, flower girl changed into glamor girl. Her performance is a remarkable one, as much for its avoidance of the pyrotechnics of The Great Actress Running The Gamut as for the sincerity and skill with which she illumines every facet of Shaw's heroine. Whether she is the Cockney girl whining self-pityingly over an imagined wrong or the handsome lady rebelling over emotional complications arising out of her transfiguration, everything Miss Lawrence does is of a piece and suits properly the play to which the character belongs. Miss Lawrence clearly does not consider *Pygmalion* a "vehicle."

Miss Lawrence's recital, in the overly precise manner of one who is learning to speak properly, of the sad death of her aunt to whom "gin was like mother's milk" was as hilarious as it was artful. There was another fine moment when Miss Lawrence, with her back turned to the audience, and with hardly an audible sound, made the audience know that she was crying from the depths of her soul.

The production is a generally satisfactory one, although Sir Cedric Hardwicke's direction occasionally suggests that he was content to let the experienced actors working under him evolve things for themselves. This lack of direction is most evident when Miss Lawrence is not onstage. Raymond Massey as the professor of phonetics who knows 130 vowel sounds and clings hard to bachelorhood, supports Miss Lawrence capably, but lacks the lightness that might give the production a lift when she is not around. Melville Cooper is the flower girl's dustman father, and makes the most of Shaw's ironic comments on the "deserving poor," "the undeserving poor," and the evils of "middle class morality."

—SEYMOUR PECK.

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NEW YORK Herald Tribune

DECEMBER 27, 1945

By OTIS L. GUERNSEY JR.

Christmas Champagne

LAST evening's revival of George Bernard Shaw's "Pygmalion" was a most auspicious beginning for the new repertory group known as Theater Incorporated and, of course, a good showcase for the wide farcical variety of a Gertrude Lawrence performance. In this production of the Shaw romance about a guttersnipe turned into a great lady, Miss Lawrence and Raymond Massey are surrounded by a cast and a mis-en-scene worthy of a first-run staging. There are a few rough spots here, but Miss Lawrence and company combine with the Shavian wit to turn the trick almost every time. The new show at the Ethel Barrymore is a satisfying, if not great, "Pygmalion," which is to say a vastly entertaining comedy revival.

* * *

As Eliza Doolittle, the roguish little cockney flower girl of the play's first act, the British farceuse is "deliciously low," but not quite "horribly dirty." Miss Lawrence extracts all the comedy innuendo of a slum girl in contact with well-bred society with an engaging toss of the head or an expert inflection of a line in dialect, yet she always has a twinkle in her eye indicating that she knows she is in for something better. After she has been re-educated by Massey as Henry Higgins, the language expert who bets that he can pass her off as a duchess at a court garden party after six months training, she is wonderfully amusing in her first attempt at a formal salon, in which she makes mistakes in grammar while speaking in stiffly correct accents. Miss Lawrence conveys all these elements of the role easily and credibly, as well as the dignity and emotion of the final scenes.

* * *

Massey enters the role of the haughty, intellectual, linguistic Pygmalion, who would change a Lobody into a Galatea and then throw her back to shift for herself, with a little less than the fine, sharp edge of characterization required of it. He is perfect in anger and in outraged dignity, but his blunt, straightforward style gives Shaw's magnificent cynic an air of boorish petulance rather than sublime selfishness and lazy wit. Melville Cooper does a memorable comedy turn as Eliza Doolittle's father, the homely philosopher who believes in the "undeserving poor," and Cecil Humphreys is calmly right as Higgins's gentlemanly and level-headed partner in the experiment.

* * *

Each of the supporting players fills his or her part quite adequately, and Cedric Hardwicke's staging is a formal frame of movement playing a clear second to the lines and the actors. Miss Lawrence's costumes by Motley are in either in ridiculously bad or startlingly good taste, according to the requirements of the play, and among the Donald Oenslager settings is a triumph of a blue and white drawing room suggesting the willow pattern in crockery. The immaculate production, the art and enthusiasm of Miss Lawrence and her cohorts and the timeless comedy script by G. B. S. make this "Pygmalion" an evening of great good humor.

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The New York Times

DECEMBER 27, 1945

Miss Lawrence Returns

Taking one consideration with another, it is pleasant this morning to extend felicitations to Theatre Incorporated and to express the hope that it ahs a long and prosperous existence. Dedicated to the proposition that there ought to be a people's theatre in which important plays, past and present, may be seen, this organization made its bow last night with a revival of George Bernard Shaw's "Pygmalion" at the Barrymore Theatre, and the promise of hearing and seeing good theatre is a bright one.

Not that "Pygmalion" is a perfect play or that it represents Mr. Shaw at his best. It has its flaws and last night there were moments when it was rather obvious that some of its lines had lost their lustre through the years. But it is to the play's credit that in spite of the thirty-one years since it was first presented in New York it has stood the test of time remarkably well. Much of what Mr. Shaw said back in those dim days still has point and relevance today and that is considerably more than will be able to be said of our contemporary playwrights. Certainly nothing on the boards this season will be able to lift its head more than a generation hence with similar results.

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On the whole the players who have been entrusted with this Shavian Cinderella story of a Cockney flower picked up by a phonetics professor and turned into a "duchess" in half a year do well by Mr. Shaw and their sponsors.

Gertrude Lawrence, who is back with us again, does not always quite bring off the role of the transformed young woman, plucked from before the portico of St. Paul's Church in Covent Garden. There are moments in the earlier scenes when she is not quite believable, and again there are moments in the final scene when one wishes she would get through with more pathos and tenderness. But then, perhaps, this is only carping. Miss Lawrence knows how to wring the fun from Mr. Shaw's lines, and in her scene in the home of Professor Higgins' mother, she is just about perfect.

In the role of the scientist devoted to lingual accents, Raymond Massey gives a fine rendition, although once or twice he leaned a bit to the side of exaggeration. He is every bit the misogynist, the callous man of science, obvious to the manners of society, absorbed and intent on proving that he can fool quality with his flower girl.

* * *

A smaler bouquet is the lot of Melville Cooper, who as the father of Eliza, and the man entrusted with Mr. Shaw's barbs at middle-class morality, has been permitted by Director Cedric Hardwicke to play a little too broadly. Mr. Doolittle, devoted to being one of the undeserving poor, eventually to be caught up by destiny and made a man of the middle class with all its inhaibitions and prohibitions, gets his many laughs all right, but he seems to be too much of the comedian for the part.

Cecil Humphreys plays Colonel Pickering, accomplice in the experiment, pleasantly; Katherine Emmet is Professor Higgins' understanding mother and Anita Bolster, as Mrs. Pearce, the housekeeper, is right.

Donald Oenslager has contributed the right settings and Motley has designed the costumes with taste and in the period. And, in spite of minor shortcomings, Theatre Incorporated has made the theatre a pleasure again. L. B. F.

The Sun

DECEMBER 27, 1945

'PYGMALION' REVIVED

The newly formed Theater Incorporated promptly put the town in its debt last evening as it set Gertrude Lawrence and Raymond Massey to performing on the stage of the Ethel Barrymore Theater in an excellent revival of George Bernard Shaw's comedy, "Pygmalion." Its heroine, Eliza Doolittle, is a natural for Miss Lawrence, and under the aegis of this organization, of which her husband, Richard Aldrich, is managing director, she makes the role a lustrous addition to an already impressive list of memorable stage portraits.

Written in 1912 and first introduced to New York audiences two years later by Mrs. Patrick Campbell, this fable of the London flower girl who was transformed successfully into the likes of a duchess by a professor of phonetics, of course is not Shaw at the top of his form. Even when the Theater Guild was giving Broadway its last look at it nineteen years ago with Lynn Fontanne as Eliza, note was taken that many of its barbs at middle class stupidity had become dated. The added passage of time has accentuated that flaw. In its characterization, however, and in plenty of its wit, it is as fresh and alive as ever, and particularly when Miss Lawrence is on the stage, it is still first rate theater.

From the moment the sniveling and rough voiced Eliza first appears in Prof. Higgins's Wimpole street laboratory in her quest to talk like a lady until the speech expert has won his bet he could make her completely over, Miss Lawrence builds up the part beautifully, blending its comic and tragic aspects skillfully, and bringing the play to a superb climax in her playing of the closing scenes.

Despite a tendency to become a trifle heavy handed now and then, Mr. Massey's professor matches her Eliza well, bringing out all the egotism and the stubborness in the bachelor's nature. Playgoers of the Twenties may miss, however, the tang Henry Travers once brought to the role of Eliza's father, who glories in his membership in the "undeserving poor." Melville Cooper's portrayal is more obvious clowning. Some of the play's most amusing moments come from his lines, and at least, there was plenty of laughter when he was on the stage last evening. Katherine Emmet is excellent as the savant's understanding mother, and the rest of the cast performs ably under the deft guidance of Sir Cedrick Hardwicke. The settings by Donald Oenslager are tastefully done.

It is the plan of Theater Incorporated, which is a non-profit organization, to follow "Pygmalion" with further revivals and some new plays too. The group's production of the Shaw work, which is scheduled for eight weeks, augurs well for their future. HERRICK BROWN.

Journal American

DECEMBER 27, 1945

'Pygmalion' Revived At the Barrymore

By JIM O'CONNOR

The theatre, like history, repeats itself. So does George Bernard Shaw.

Thirty-one years ago, Shaw's "Pygmalion" was produced at the Park Theatre here by Lieber and Company. Nineteen years ago, the Theatre Guild revived it at the Guild Theatre. Last night, Theatre Inc., made its bow as a producer with the G. B. S. classic. The scene was the Ethel Barrymore Theatre.

On each occasion the verdict was—success.

The latest Eliza, who crossed the social ice to become a lady, is Gertrude Lawrence, last on Broadway as the star of "Lady in The Dark." Recall her in "Susan and God" and "Private Lives?"

Cockney Accent

She played with sensitiveness and humor last night the role of the flower girl who rose from the sidewalks of London to a better (if temporary) place in British society. Her cockney accent, at the start, however, was difficult to understand.

Equally good was Raymond Massey, the phonetics expert, who taught Eliza how to speak in a tone of voice—with surprising results for himself. Massey knows how to handle a Shaw line, having done it before in "Candida" and "The Doctor's Dilemma."

In the light of present day acting (or what passes for acting), the acting in "Pygmalion" occasionally appeared stilted or artificial. But that obviously was due to the fact that Cedric Hardwicke directed the cast in the mode of 1908, when the action takes place. Perhaps times have changed since 1908.

Modern Mythology

You remember Pygmalion, the sculptor in Greek mythology, who fell in love with Galatea, a statue he created, a statue to which Venus gave life.

Well, Shaw's Pygmalion is a phonetics teacher; his Galatea a flower peddler from the slums. This gives G. B. S.—the veteran Irish playwright who was a drama critic himself once—a chance to report on his study of human nature. It's a report that is studded with Shavian darts.

Although romance rears its lovely head just before the curtain comes down, you leave the theatre with a feeling of uncertainty. Was Eliza going to marry Higgins? You don't know. Shaw plotted it that way.

Then there were times when some of the characters seemed to be delivering speeches instead of conversing. This was especially noticeable in the last act, which was almost pedestrian in tempo. But the orations, although lengthy, sparkled with Shavian wit.

Cooper Scores

Incidentally, if Melville Cooper, as the dustman, didn't capture the acting honors of the evening, he came very close to it. His lines were loaded with Shaw's chuckles.

Cecil Humphreys as Col. Pickering and Katherine Emmet as Mrs. Higgins also scored.

"Pygmalion" isn't a problem play, nor an important play. But it's a vastly amusing play.

Through Eliza Doolittle, Shaw shows how far one can get with a little veneer; how one can really shine with a little polish. Which is just as true today as it was in 1912, when he wrote "Pygmalion."

And while Henry Higgins did a fine job of improving Eliza Doolittle, an even better job was done by Eliza in improving the professor.

Noted Predecessors

As Eliza, Gertrude Lawrence follows in the footsteps of Mrs. Pat. Campbell, who played the role in London, 1913, and New York, 1914; Tilli Dureux, Berlin, 1914; and Lynn Fontanne, New York, 1926.

Raymond Massey's predecessors as Prof. Higgins were Philip Merivale, New York, 1914, and Reginald Mason, New York, 1926.

"Pygmalion" itself has even been played here in Spanish and Yiddish; was a WPA Federal Theatre project in 1938; and Sylvia Sidney did it on the subway circuit in 1925. It was made into a splendid motion picture seven years ago, with Wendy Hiller and Leslie Howard heading the cast.

Thirty-three years after it was written, Bernard Shaw's "Pygmalion" still provides a delightful evening in the theatre. It did it again last night at the Barrymore. That is a real tribute to its merit.

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"Pygmalion"—*continued*

DAILY NEWS

DECEMBER 27, 1945

Lawrence Stars In Revival of Shaw Play

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Lovers of The Thuttuh and devotees of The Drahma are always talking about putting on distinguished plays with distinguished casts, either in repertory or in a series of brief engagements. But nothing much is ever done about it, for all the fine talk.

So it is heartening, exciting news that a new group, Theatre Incorporated, made its debut at the Barrymore last night with a brilliant, glowing performance of one of Shaw's best comedies, "Pygmalion."

The play is distinguished; for its wit, its sharp but amiable jabs at the silly shortcomings of the human race, are sound enough to survive the passage of 31 years.

The company is distinguished, with Gertrude Lawrence, Raymond Massey, Melville Cooper, Cecil Humphreys and all the others playing in a manner that is theatre at its best. They play as individuals, each with his own marked style; yet somehow they all play together and are never at cross-purposes. There is, therefore, one star of "Pygmalion" who does not appear on the stage—Cedric Hardwicke, the director. There is a lot of talk in "Pygmalion," as there is in all Shaw's works, yet Hardwicke has kept it moving smoothly and effortlessly.

Either Shaw or Hardwicke, or both, or perhaps Miss Lawrence herself, has created a new Gertrude Lawrence who is almost as great a triumph as the creation in the play of a lady from gutttersnipe. Not, heaven forfend, that I mean Miss Lawrence has not always been a lady. But she has, almost always, displayed a physical bounce and a penchant for snatching any scene within reach that are somewhat alarming to a man of my sedate beliefs.

A New Gertrude Lawrence.

In "Pygmalion" Miss Lawrence works quietly and with steady purpose as, under the tutelage of Prof. Massey, she transforms herself from a gamine to a woman of beauty and poise. She is funny—very funny—every moment she is supposed to be; she shows heart and tenderness and grace; she is pitiable as the "experiment" who, now that she has succeeded, is no longer wanted by the man who thinks he has created her; she is gallant when gallantry must triumph. And she is beautiful.

Massey makes something electric out of the professor of philology, being incisive, cocky, annoying and truth-telling. He plays against Miss Lawrence, as he should, yet always somehow with her.

Another delight is Mr. Cooper as the lowly, philosophical and once-happy dustman who finds life all to the good as long as he is one of the "undeserving poor" and resents his elevation into middle-class respectability. As a Shaw role this is a gem, and Mr. Cooper makes the most of it—but never commits the mistake of trying to make too much of it.

Katherine Emmet, Mr. Humphreys, Anita Bolster and the rest seem all of one spirit—the spirit of good theatre. Donald Oenslager's settings and the Motleys' costumes are charming.

Theatre Incorporated, Richard Aldrich, managing director, is a non-profit organization "committed to a sustained program of great plays of the past and outstanding plays of the present." It has made a fine beginning with "Pygmalion," which is to run eight weeks.

New York World-Telegram

DECEMBER 27, 1945

'Pygmalion' Opens with Miss Lawrence

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

Gertrude Lawrence's versatility has ceased long since to be news. In the production of "Pygmalion," which opened last night, she runs a less violent gamut than has been her wont on her most recent appearance here, but works her way from gutttersnipe to potential ambassadress with some telling moments and great pictorial effect.

In this saga of phoneticism making the woman, the star is at her best in the scene of first testing her new accent, and in the final stanza where she steps off the educational ladder she has been forced to climb, and finds a level of her own.

The former of these two high points is so sharp in timing and so acute in expression that it stands out from the surrounding text almost as an inserted interlude. Miss Lawrence's final scene has a bite and glow which the production elsewhere lacks.

Miss Lawrence Exquisite.

It is impossible not to prefer swan to duckling in Miss Lawrence's shifts of character. In speaking of their protegee's success in society, one of the two men who have metamorphosed the flower girl into such an excellent imitation of a lady, says: "Lots of real people think style comes by nature so they never learn. There's always something professional about doing a thing superlatively."

Miss Lawrence is so exquisite in the later scenes, where every gesture or movement or modulation of tone is so finely calculated, that they far overshadow those earlier sections where she has played the street urchin. She achieves pathos and charm as the flower vendor, but the ragged beginner on the experiment lacks distinction.

Shaw has called his play academic and stated that art is didactic. Delightful as it is always to watch Miss Lawrence, it is as an emotional and glamorous actress that she is most brilliant. The intellectual laboratory sheds a chill over her sparkle. One is inclined to think that plays should be tailored to this star, and not the other way round.

A strange sort of discomfort permeated the work of the other excellent members of the cast last night. It was as if an extremely fine stock company, slightly in awe of a classic, was producing "Pygmalion," and the seasoned actors took their roles by allotment.

Massey as Higgins.

Raymond Massey is inclined to play the professorial Higgins for more sympathy than his unpleasant disposition warrants. He gives the part youthfulness, and the intensely selfish enthusiasm it needs.

Cecil Humphreys, more than any of the others, seems right at home in the part of the second experimenter. His Colonel Pickering evolves as the tolerant and sympathetic scholar he should be, and as a performance his job is a marvel of attentiveness.

Melville Cooper has a great talent for giving his lines legitimate but surprising readings. But direction allows his Alfred Doolittle to lose sight of its underlying tragedy for the sake of its comic values.

Donald Oenslager has supplied for the production some effectively contrasting sets. Particularly effective is the prologue played in a church portico in Covent Garden, with the characters silhouetted against the misty rainy street.

Motley's costumes are exclusively pictorial of the period, and a couple of the dresses for Miss Lawrence could not be surpassed for setting off her grace.

"Billion Dollar Baby"

PM

DECEMBER 23, 1945

—Kronenberger—

A Fine Try Just Misses

PM Reviews

In the weakest, wobbliest season for musicals in a good many years, there has been one thing to keep looking forward to. The team that turned out *On the Town* (with Morton Gould replacing Leonard Bernstein) had a new show on the way. Last night, with Christmas just around the corner, *Billion Dollar Baby* arrived. Perhaps, after *On the Town*, one was a little too greedy in what one asked of Santa Claus. In any case; though it is a musical that contains some delightful things, though it is a musical you are always rooting for and always respect, *Billion Dollar Baby* falls just a trifle short.

The people who have put it together have courage as well as talent. They will have no truck with the hackneyed formulas and hammy notions of run-of-the-mine Broadway musicals. They want to do something original and alive, and they climb out on a limb without the slightest trepidations about the critical ax that may chop them down. As a result, *Billion Dollar Baby* is no more commonplace than *On the Town* was. In fact, it is far more ambitious. That is at least one reason, and a very honorable reason, why it is far less successful.

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Billion Dollar Baby is a musical about the '20s—the '20s as they have already turned into a legend. About a crescendo of violent living, feverish pleasures, gangster excitement, insane and ridiculous enterprises; about speakeasies and dance marathons and Atlantic City beauty contests. About an age that was itself melodramatic, rather than just containing melodrama. About an age that was all syncopation and blues, all bath-tub gin and gimme-girls and gunfire. That's the legend, and to some extent the truth; and *Billion Dollar Baby* has set about dramatizing it.

Jerome Robbins has caught a good deal of it in his dances; Morton Gould has caught some of it in his music; Betty Comden and Adolph Green have caught a little of it in their story—which is principally that of a good-looking Staten Island bitch fiendishly on the make. But *Billion Dollar Baby* runs into trouble. For one thing, it can never quite make up its mind whether to burlesque an era or to catch its real quality of melodrama; there is, at any rate, not enough burlesque to make for sustained fun, and too much to make for sustained excitement. For another thing, just because of its violent, hectic subject-matter, *Billion Dollar Baby* has a hammer-and-tongs quality that never lets up, that begins as exhilarating but winds up as wearing.

Beyond that, Miss Green and Mr. Comden, whose book for *On the Town* was one of its greatest merits, have this time turned in a book that is largely a liability. It is not only that a number of their scenes seems feeble and most of their verbal humor seems forced, but that (I think) they have felt the influence of *Pal Joey, and* tried too hard to make a Pal Josie of their heroine. But they have shown little of John O'Hara's insight and none of his realism; they have only, in running away from sweet musical-comedy heroines, become almost excessively hard and cold. They do a little better with their night-club hostess, a Texas Guinan named Georgia Motley; and better still with their middle-aged gangster, who is admirably played by David Burns.

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All this is unfortunate, for it makes the many good things in *Billion Dollar Baby* seem too much like mere side-dishes. The Green-Comden comic sense shines forth in a very funny first-act finale spoofing a big production number of the '20s, in which all the showgirls impersonate birds. It shines forth again in the lyrics of a very good song called *Speaking of Pals*. Mr. Gould has provided a score that, in keeping with the show, has more atmosphere and wit than melody. As for Mr. Robbins, he is probably the hero of the evening, having contrived a lot of lively and amusing dancing, my favorite being a comedy ballet called *Charleston*. Oliver Smith's sets and Irene Sharaff's period costumes also call for a good deal of praise.

As for the cast, Joan McCracken does a fine job as the heroine, somehow remaining engaging in spite of being the worst kind of female heel, and dancing handsomely. Mitzi Green is good as Georgia, particularly when singing a couple of spoof songs. And George Abbott's directing has not cheated the '20s of any of their liveliness.

—Louis Kronenberger

'BILLION DOLLAR BABY.'

Musical play, with book and lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green; music by Morton Gould; choreography and musical numbers staged by Jerome Robbins; settings by Oliver Smith; costumes designed by Irene Sharaff; production directed by George Abbott; musical director, Max Goberman; presented by Paul Feigay and Oliver Smith at the Alvin Theatre, Friday, December 21, 1945. The cast:

Ma Jones	Emily Ross
Pa Jones	William David
Mama	Shirley Van
Janet	Marta Harriton
1st Neighbor	Edward Hodge
2nd Neighbor	Howard Lenters
3rd Neighbor	Douglas Deane
Champ Watson	Danny Daniels
Photographer	Anthony Reed
Reporter	Allan Gilbert
Maribelle	Joan McCracken
Gawky Girl	Helen Gallagher
Mother	Beverly Hosier
Miss Texas	Althea Rider
M. C.	Richard Sanford
Georgia Motley	Mitzi Green
Violin Player	Tony Cardell
Jerry Bonanza	Don De Leo
1st Newsboy	Douglas Jones
2nd Newsboy	Richard Thomas
Dapper Welch	David Burns
Rocky Barton	William Tabbert
Cigarette Girl	Jeri Archer
Waiter	David Thomas
M. M. Montague	Robert Chisholm
Marathon M. C.	Allan Gilbert
1st Chorus Girl	Joan Mann
Comic	Douglas Deane
2nd Chorus Girl	Lorraine Todd
3rd Chorus Girl	Virginia Gorski
4th Chorus Girl	Virginia Poe
Danny	Tony Gardell
J. C. Creasy	Horace Cooper
Art Leffenbush	Edward Hooge
Rodney Gender	Richard Sanford
Watchman	Robert Edwin
Rocky (who dances)	James Mitchell
Policeman	Howard Lenters

SYNOPSIS: Time, 1928-1929. Act I, Scene 1, Staten Island living room. Scene 2, Atlantic City Boardwalk. Scene 3, Staten Island living room. Scene 4, Staten Island ferry. Scene 5, Front of speakeasy. Scene 6, Chez Georgia. Scene 7, Georgia's dressing room. Scene 8, Staten Island living room. Scene 9, Street. Scene 10, Dapper's apartment. Scene 11, The Marathon. Scene 12, Dapper's apartment. Scene 13, Backstage of the Jollities. Scene 14, On stage Jollities. Act II, Scene 1, A funeral. Scene 2, Porch of the Plaza Hotel, Palm Beach. Scene 3, Entrance to Marathon. Scene 4, The Marathon. Scene 5, Entrance to Marathon. Scene 6, Maribelle's bedroom. Scene 7, Church vestry. Scene 8, Wedding.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

DECEMBER 22, 1945

By HOWARD BARNES

Smart Nostalgic Nonsense

"BILLION DOLLAR BABY" is a brashly satirical and bountiful musical show. To paraphrase a catch-line from the "terrific twenties" which it lampoons, everybody should be happy at the Alvin. The book and lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green are slyly refreshing and curiously nostalgic. Morton Gould's score is rich and varied, while it is sung and danced brilliantly. Mitzi Green and Joan McCracken are both so good in leading roles that they wind up in a photo-finish and their assistants are eager and definitely agreeable. There are times when satire and musical romance jar rather harshly, but on the whole this Paul Feigay-Oliver Smith production is a honey.

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The authors and lyricists have picked a tough subject for burlesque. The more frenetic aspects of American existence in 1928 and 1929 were so nonsensical that they have frequently defied reverential ridicule. Fortunately, they have succeeded in making their billion dollar baby a stray of consequence as well as a funny product of the flapper age. Since Jerome Robbins has contributed fascinating dance footnotes to the proceedings and George Abbott has staged them in just the mood of nervous excitement which they demanded, the show should attract even those who did not live through the speakeasy fin-du-siecle which bridged two world wars.

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The production numbers, as they are known, are superbly integrated into a rather stumbling yarn about a bathing beauty and her quest for that old pot of gold. The "Charleston" interlude in the first act is so full of caustic commentary that Miss Green's final tagging of the episode with a tear-jerking ballad, "Broadway Blossom" becomes something of a tour-de-force. Night club hostesses, speakeasy proprietors, rum runners and gangsters are all in the picture, including the average citizen who frequently blew his top in that easily recognizable period. The enchanting symbolic dance of the climax, with Miss McCracken doing a superbly versatile job of envisaging the less glamorous side of life in the "terrific twenties" is equally good.

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Between the big mise-ensembles there is no end of satirical gaiety. The marathon dance is reconstructed to perfection. So is the typical musical show of the era in which scantily clad chorines nasally intoned "A Lovely Girl Is Like a Bird." The take-offs on financial foolishness are on the dullish side, although Robert Chisholm is fine as the fellow who predicts a stock-market boom in the thirties. William Tabbert, David Burns, Danny Daniels and too many other enthusiastic and skilled performers to mention are in there pitching in every scene. Incidentally, the Irene Sharaff costumes themselves constitute a brilliant burlesque of fashion designing. "Billion Dollar Baby" is as bouncing and sometimes as random as the crazy few years to which it puts a mirror, but it is great good fun.

The Sun

DECEMBER 22, 1945

'Billion Dollar Baby,' Done at the Alvin, Raucous, Generally Satisfactory.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

The frenzy of the mad, mad Twenties forms the background of "Billion Dollar Baby," a raucous, spotty but generally satisfactory song-and-dance play that moved into the Alvin last night. Paul Feigay and Oliver Smith, sponsors of the popular "On the Town," are the producers of this new one, and George Abbott, its over-all director, has kept it moving.

There isn't much humor in the book that Betty Comden and Adolph Green have fashioned for "Billion Dollar Baby," but it has considerable life. Their lyrics are good enough, Morton Gould has supplied some nice music, and the ballet that turns up in the second half is a genuinely imaginative one. The Alvin's new show is by no means up to "On the Town," but it comes forth as a professional job and with enough all-round values to make it a go.

Miss Comden and Green have done a book about the distractions of life in the era of bootlegging and prohibition, marathon dances and the Charleston, gangster killings and gangster funerals. Specifically, their story is of the pretty and brooding Maribelle Jones, a relentless little girl from Staten Island who goes to the beauty contest at Atlantic City as Miss New York. Failing to win the Miss America title and tired of her dreary home life, she decides to go out for the big time. She gets caught up with a big-shot racketeer and finds herself in love with the hoodlum who kills him, but changes the scene of her operations to Palm Beach. She finally lands her billionaire, but just as the Wall Street crash overtakes them all.

"Billion Dollar Baby" follows an uneven course, but it never gets downright dull. Its better numbers include a delightful burlesque, in the fashion of old-time Ziegfeld, called "A Lovely Girl." The Charleston dance sequence is well executed. Outstanding songs include "Speaking of Pals" and "Havin' a Time," done by Mitzi Green. In the second-act ballet the new dream girl of 52d street foresees the terrors that life with her gangster, Rocky, would bring on.

Joan McCracken, as the billionaire-bound Maribelle Jones, is called upon for singing, dancing and acting now and then. She is at best in the ballet and is only moderately successful in the other departments. Mitzi Green gets a good deal of fun from the role of the night club hostess who never seems able to hold her man. David Burns plays the big-shot racketeer with a lot of gusto, and it's too bad he has to leave the play so early via a slug in the back. Shirley Van and Danny Daniels form a spirited dancing team. There's no prettier girl on the stage than Althea Elder as Miss Texas. William Tabbert has a good voice, and so has Robert Chisholm, always good to have around a musical show. Oliver Smith has done the settings and the gaudy costumes of the period have been supplied by Irene Sharaff.

"Billion Dollar Baby" is a rather ragged musical play and it flounders frequently, but it has pace and a lot of vitality.

New York World-Telegram

DECEMBER 22, 1945

'Billion Dollar Baby' So-So Satire on '20s

By BURTON RASCOE.

The multiple begettors of the very successful ballet-musical, "On the Town," decided (perhaps in too great a hurry) to give us more of the same, on a more ornate and expensive scale. The result is "Billion Dollar Baby," a ballet pasquinade on the follies of the 1920s, or the Decade of the Great Binge, which opened at the Alvin last night.

Again, as in "On the Town," the new Paul Feigay-Oliver Smith musical is largely dependent upon the choreography of Jerome Robbins, who follows and embellishes a thin book, which is weak in comedy and sparse in lyrics, by Betty Comden and Adolph Green. There is a very satisfactory first act, fast moving, clever, rhythmical, broadly satirical and diverting. But the second act shows signs that the authors were fatigued; satiric inspiration lags; there is no surprise; and the comedy, anemic in the first place, gives up the ghost altogether.

Superficial Satire.

Those who are old enough to recall, with an involuntary wince, the taste of bathtub gin and the jimjams of an applejack hangover, will find much to remind them, in amused retrospect, of what foolish boys and girls they were back in the frenetic days of gangster-run speakeasies, the Charleston, the Florida boom, the marathon dances, the bunion derbies and the orgy of stock market speculation. But it was an era which was a burlesque of itself (in its more obvious manifestations) and the authors of "Billion Dollar Baby" have satirized only its surface aspects, which have been satirized over and over again.

The weakest feature of the musical is that the comedy is confined almost altogether to the off-center pantomime of the ballet. Mitzi Green, a superb comedienne, has a role based upon the character of the late Texas Guinan, but she is given practically no material with which to realize the juicy gustiness inherent in the role. She is a hard-boiled nightclub hostess, with a good heart and no illusions; but about all she is given to do is walk on and off the stage, grimace a few times and sing a bathetic barroom ballad, "Broadway Blossom," in exaggerated tremulo.

Joan McCracken Good.

Joan McCracken has the principal role, and most of the action revolves around her. Gone is her rather cloying cuteness (for which relief, many thanks) and instead she is now a flint-hearted, feather-brained little gold digger, shrewd in taking what she wants, but no better than the tramp Miss Green calls her in the play. She handles this unsympathetic role with bouncing aplomb, achieving some of her best effects by broad burlesque.

Miss McCracken is the billion dollar baby. Although engaged to a jerk who is in training to be a marathon dance champion, after which he is going in for flagpole sitting, Miss McCracken is picked up on a Staten Island ferry boat by a small-time bootlegger and taken to a night club where her escort is bumped off, under orders from the boss, without Miss McCracken's knowing what happened to him. The boss takes her over, in spite of the protests of his permanent sweetheart, Miss Green,

Gangster Funeral Funny.

Meanwhile Miss McCracken falls in love with her benefactor's chief bodyguard (William Tabbert), an eventuality that makes it necessary for him to take it on the lam, when the boss and his gunmen sing, for his benefit, a trenody over the curious disappearance of a number of the Boss' old pals who had stepped out of line. The ditty is called "Speaking of Pals."

Somebody is perforated by machine-gun bullets and the body thrown into the river. The gunmen report that the departed is Mr. Tabbert; and there is an elaborate gangster funeral for him—one of the funniest bits in the show. But Mr. Tabbert shows up in Palm Beach, just as Miss McCracken is about to marry a billionaire Wall Street plunger, who is so sure of himself that he doesn't believe the stock market party is over and that he is broke.

Audience Likes It.

This little morality play has much to recommend it on the score of choreography (settings by Oliver Smith), costumes (by Irene Sharaff), direction (by George Abbott) and the performances of the Misses Green, McCracken, Robert Chisholm, David Burns, Danny Daniels and Shirley Van (tap specialists) and corps de ballet.

The music by Morton Gould is stunty without being melodic and puts a strain upon the resources of Miss McCracken in such numbers as "Bad Timing" and "Faithless." The audience, last night, seemed to have few reservations about the merit of the musical.

DAILY NEWS

DECEMBER 22, 1945

'Billion Dollar Baby' an Engaging Musical About Speakeasy Days

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Oliver Smith and Paul Feigay, who produced "On the Town," have come up with a musical called "Billion Dollar Baby" which is even better. They introduced it last night at the Alvin Theatre, and I had a very fine time.

"Billion Dollar Baby" concerns the markhellinger era of the speakeasy 20's—the time of gangsters and gangster funerals, of Texas Guinan and her silly suckers, of beauty contests at Atlantic City and dance marathons wherever they were staged.

It looks upon these things with a not too critical eye, for the authors, Betty Comden and Adolph Green, are not yet old enough to assay the Era of Wonderful Nonsense with the cold judgment of historians. But it does look upon them humorously, and in it are some fetching people.

Mitzi Green, as Texas Guinan, is quite remarkable as a comedienne. David Burns is an engaging caricature of the Larry Fay type of mobster-in-business, and Joan McCracken, who dances enchantingly, wisely avoids all the opportunities of being cute as the heroine. The supporting company is amiable, and includes Danny Daniels and Shirley Van, who are excellent dance specialists, and Robert Chisholm, whose portrayal of a stuffed shirt is always accurate and amusing.

The success of "Billion Dollar Baby," however, does not lie with its principals or, possibly, with its authors, good as they are. Oliver Smith, who made the sets; Jerome Robbins, who devised the dances and staged the musical numbers, and George Abbott, who directed the whole show, are the real stars. Together they have assembled and routined an evening of song and dance which is swift and smart and which never tries to bowl you over with 10 tons of scenery or two tons of Powers models.

The music is by Morton Gould. I have never cared for his sirupy, over-orchestrated arrangements for the radio, but in the case of "Billion Dollar Baby" I am on his side. He can be funny and he can be terse, as well as fruity, and his score suffices.

Marries Wrong Guy.

The story has something to do with a girl from Staten Island who almost becomes Miss America in Atlantic City, and who gets swept into the world of mobsters, speakeasy night clubs and wealthy idiots. It is not, praise be, a conventional yarn, either, for Miss McCracken marries the wrong man at the end and is left wondering what to do next.

The costumes, by Irene Sharaff, are superb. They look like caricatures of the flapper dress of the Tasteless Twenties, but I have a sickening feeling that they aren't caricatures at all, but very accurate examples of what the well-clad female wore in the days when I was young and had no judgment whatever.

It is nice, just before Christmas, to be able to welcome a musical like "Billion Dollar Baby." It makes one feel as though one had done a good deed. Actually, "Baby" did the good deed for me, and I thank it.

Journal American

DECEMBER 22, 1945

'Billion Dollar Baby' Opens at Alvin

By ROBERT GARLAND

Yes, sir, that's my "Billion Dollar Baby" that talked, sang and danced its oft times tough, sometimes tender and constantly disillusioned way last night across the stage of the Alvin Theatre. It's my "Billion Dollar Baby" until, shortly before the finale, it runs headlong into a pedestrian ballet from which it never quite recovers. From then on, I wouldn't give much more than a million dollars for it.

Subtitled "A Musical Play of the Terrific Twenties," "Billion Dollar Baby" is a fine, fresh feather in the producing cap of the Paul Feigay and Oliver Smith, whose "On the Town" still runs successfully at the Martin Beck. Here, again, the youthful impresari have called on Betty Comden and Adolph Green for book and lyrics; Jerome Robbins for choreography, and George Abbott for over-all direction.

Only Leonard Bernstein is missing as composer. In his stead is Morton Gould, which may—or may not—be an asset! For Mr. Gould's brilliantly self-orchestrated score calls for quite a bit of hearing. It's certainly not up anybody's Tin Pan Alley.

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If I know what I mean, my "Billion Dollar Baby" is not entirely unrelated to the "Pal Joey" which, also under George Abbott's directional juriadiction, flourished some time back at the Ethel Barrymore. With more than a dancing touch of "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue" thrown in. Which goes to prove that Betty Comden and Adolph Green know that even a Richmond Cinderella may smile and smile and remain a heel.

The heelish heroine of the new play-with-music is the off-shore midnight maiden whose name is Maribelle. Taking the words right out of her mouth, it's not money she cares for. It's what money can buy! So you look and listen as she climbs from a Dongan Hills cottage to a Staten Island ferry, to a Manhattan speakeasy, to a Riverside dr. apartment, to a role in "The Jollities," to a sumptuously sugared daddy.

En route she breaks every law of God, man and decency. But up she goes! Over her dead ideals, her dead conscience and her dead boy-friend, she gets her man and gets his billions. Time, they say, wounds all heels! But not onstage at the Alvin.

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Georgia or Texas

Although Joan McCracken has covered no little impressive ground since she fell down in "Oklahoma" and went boom to Hollywood, it's Mitzi Green as Georgia Motley who earns the highest actorial honors "Billion Dollar Baby" has to offer. Her Texas—beg pardon, Georgia—is simply grand. So is the Dapper Welch of David Burns. In a rakish new makeup, Miss McCracken still has ballet on the brain.

In surrounding roles, cheers are in order for Emily Ross, Danny Daniels, William Tabbert and Robert Chisholm. Also for the settings by Oliver Smith, the costumes by Irene Sharaff and the orchestra beneath the baton of Max Goberman. And for all but the "Life with Rocky" ballet by Jerome Robbins. That, "Billion Dollar Baby" and I could do without quite happily. Herewith, it's forgiven and forgotten.

Right off the orchestra, I think I like the score supplied by Morton Gould. But not as much as I like Mr. Gould's orchestrations. Or as much as I'd like a clean corny tune to whistle as I leave the theatre . . . Even so, it's still my "Billion Dollar Baby" at the Alvin. And yours, if you're with it.